

## STUDENT-MIGRANT-WORKERS: *Temporal aspects of precarious work and life in Finland*

### Abstract

This article addresses the issue of non-EU student-migrant-workers in Finland drawing on data from in-depth interviews conducted with the sub-Saharan African migrants on student visa. The migrants' experiences of temporal limits in life and at work are examined demonstrating that student-migrant-workers have experiences of a fragmented lived time because of the temporary character of their visa. The article consequently points at the impact of student visa in creating a low-cost labour force in Finland and sheds light on the subject position of the student-migrant-worker that becomes utilisable in contemporary capitalism.

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### Keywords

Borders • precarity • migrant-workers • student-migrants • visas

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### Introduction

International student mobility is a fast-growing phenomenon globally (Raghuram 2013). In 2012, there were 3.4 million foreign students in the OECD countries (OECD 2015). During recent years, studying abroad has also become one of the most common reasons for migration to Finland. This article addresses the issue of non-EU migrants who arrive in Finland on a student visa but who simultaneously work in various low-paid workplaces in order to finance their visa, and hence, their stay in Finland. Wage work is often an unavoidable part of the student-migrants lives due to the fact that requirements attached to the hierarchical visa regime have to be met. It is therefore crucial to examine what kind of work students do and under what conditions, as well as to connect the characteristics of student-migration to tendencies in the global capitalist economy and the global border regime.

A person coming from outside the EU needs a student visa for studying in Finland. Applications for visa and for admission to a Finnish University or University of Applied Sciences are usually done in the country of departure, before students departs for Finland. The visa is classified as a temporary residence permit that has to be renewed every year. In order to be granted a student visa, there are economic requirements that involve an amount of 6720 euros in the bank account and a private health insurance in order to demonstrate the student's ability to live in the country, independent of any social benefits (Migri A, B). The economic requirements partly explain why it is usual to work while studying in Finland (Könönen 2014). Even

though work is a significant part of many students' lives, this aspect has often been understated in research. Especially the students' input on the global labour market in low skilled service jobs is often overlooked (Liu-Farrer 2009). Instead, research on international students has often been located in the field of education (e.g., Cai & Kivistö 2012) and has highlighted the logic of brain drain (e.g., Boeri et al. 2012) and accumulation of human capital (e.g., Baláz & Williams 2004).

The objective of this article is to analyse the experiences of work done by migrants who are usually categorised outside the labour market and who are not included in the statistics of migrant labour. Through critical migration theory, I aim at understanding how borders, and in particular the visa, affect the experiences of work and everyday life of temporary migrants drawing on interviews with sub-Saharan African migrants holding a student visa. I link this theoretical approach to theory on precarisation in order to indicate how these phenomena interconnect in global capitalism.

In the first part of the article, I demonstrate how the student visa functions as a way of creating a labour force that is easy to exploit and illustrate in which way the temporal aspects are prominent in the precarious experiences of the student-migrant-workers. I further indicate that borders produce new subject-positions that blur the distinction between categories of the student, the worker and the migrant. In the second part, I discuss the migrants' experience of fragmented temporalities and how this disrupts the division between temporary and permanent migration.

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## Analysing borders and precarisation

Through the perspective of critical migration studies and precarisation I examine borders that structure the lives of student-migrants. Critical migration researchers have through a focus on borders analysed changes in the administration of mobility (e.g., Rigo 2007; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). According to critical migration researchers, it is because of the existence of borders that it is possible to speak of migration, otherwise there would only be mobility (Tazzioli 2015; De Genova 2013). In this way, migration is produced as something that can and should be regulated (Tazzioli 2015). Simultaneously, the mobility of people is a central condition for a well-functioning capitalism (ibid.). Today, borders no longer function as dividing lines between sovereignties, but have multiplied and become flexible (Balibar 1998). Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, 3) write that borders not only signify territorial edges but complex social institutions with regulatory functions and symbolic power.

The governance of Finland's borders is closely connected to the EU and the Schengen area, as well as to multilateral border agencies and private enterprises. The EU member states embrace a common border system comprising of EU's external borders, as well as common directives for the administration of asylum seekers, an EU wide data base for regulating mobility and common practices of deportation (Guild 2009). A central feature of the EU border management is that business and competitiveness should not be negatively affected by border closures (Prokkola 2012). Prokkola (2012) describes the EU border regime as not a smoothly functioning entity, but as a terrain of various politico-economic projects of the EU in which many of the decisions made are the result of compromises between, often incongruous, interests of the member states. However, the Schengen Border Code does not control the border management in Finland completely, as nationally specified concerns and strategies exist. Prokkola (2012, 1332) argues that the neoliberal imperative of state competitiveness functions as a way of furthering national interests. She bases her argument on the rhetoric of the Finnish Border Guard service, according to which the permeable and secure borders support the competitiveness and productivity of the nation, which creates Finland as superior over other Schengen countries whose borders are seen to be 'leaking'.

Borders are at the core of contemporary capitalist globalisation and need to be examined as locations and situations where the world is formed in order to enhance an understanding of the heterogeneous global spaces. As Paasi (2009) argues, it is essential to contextually examine categories and concrete phenomena attached to the border, often developed in social practices and discourses, rather than the mere geopolitical boundary line in 'border regions'. Borders produce class distinctions between populations as people have unequal rights in accessing territories. Not only is there a substantial difference between EU citizens, who have the right to move freely inside the Schengen area and the non-EU citizens who don't, but also hierarchies among the non-EU citizens exist depending on their nationality, ethnicity, religion, wealth and professional skills. The EU border and immigration policy is a prominent example of the multiple hierarchies produced, as wealthy and professional migrants are more easily granted visas and residence permits than people with lower income (Prokkola 2012).

Borders also function as mechanisms of precarisation of work and migration (Könönen 2014, 30). I approach precarisation as a process of historical change in the capitalist production and focus on the subjective experiences of instability and insecurity that come with it (Jokinen et al. 2015) rather than treating precarisation as

the formation of a new social class (Standing 2012). Instability is not experienced only at the work place but also limited possibilities of building one's future or even finding temporary refuge from the unstable conditions, are aspects of precarisation. Following Könönen (2014), the concept of precarity enables the combination of two perspectives; on the one hand, the critical examination of borders and migration administration, and on the other hand, the analysis of transformations of work. I consider the legal status of foreign citizen as the central analytical point of departure. The legal status is an important feature of precarity as it influences the migrant's possibilities of staying in the country and the ability of negotiation on the labour market. Nonetheless, the possibilities are also shaped, among others, by the migrant's social networks, skills, work experience and socio-economic status.

## Student migrants in Finland

Internationally, only a minor part of the migration research has focused on more privileged, qualified and educated migrants (Favell et al. 2007, Gribble & Blackmore 2012). On the other hand, student-migration has increased by 70 % between 2000 and 2008 forming one of the fastest growing migrant groups in many of the OECD countries (Raghuram 2013). In Finland, the number of international students have more than tripled in ten years, increasing from 6000 in the beginning of the millennium to around 20 000 in 2014, of which 76% came from countries outside the EU/ETA area (CIMO 2016). Currently, the most common reasons for getting a residence permit in Finland are studies, work and family ties, ranging between 5000 and 6000 permits per category per year. In 2013, 5 426 student visas were issued and thus became the most common migrant category, higher than the category of work with 4938 permits and 4619 permits based on family relations (Migri C).

Policies are usually made according to the assumption that recruiting international students attracts highly skilled workers to the European labour markets and enhances business opportunities for Finland (Cai & Kivistö 2013, 61). Similar policy structures are common in other states of the Global North, as highly qualified migrants from a western administrative perspective are considered to stimulate the growth economy and to be socially more integrated migrants (Raghuram 2013). A recent trend in western countries has been to make it easier for migrants to obtain student visas and to stay and work in the country afterwards (Gribble & Blackmore 2012; Shumilova et al. 2012)<sup>1</sup>. The European Parliament adopted a new directive in 2016 to make the EU more attractive for the third country students and researchers. The new rules encompass the right to stay to look for a job for at least nine months and to work during studies at least 15 hours a week (European Parliament News 2016). Non-EU graduates' right to stay in Finland to look for a job was extended from 6 to 12 months in 2015 (the Ministry of the Interior, 2015). Other policies concerning international students under transformation are the introduction of university fees for non-EU students in the autumn of 2017, and hence, the abandonment of a Finnish university system free of cost.<sup>2</sup> This might negatively influence the number of people migrating to Finland on the basis of studies in the near future, as this has proven to be the case in other Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden (Shumilova et al. 2012).

Student-migration is usually examined in the realm of education and to some extent, among other types of highly skilled migration. Nevertheless, the literature examining the type of employment during studies and after graduation and the structural factors behind it is

narrow. Liu-Farrer (2009) demonstrates that students often have to work to pay for the migration journey, for university fees and for living. This work is often done in low paid service sectors, such as taxi driving and in the catering industry (ibid.). Robertson (2011) and Neilson (2009) have come to similar conclusions and have underlined the fuzziness of migrant categories such as student, migrant and worker.

In Finland, limited focus has been put on student-migrants in employment (see also Shumilova et. al. 2012). Shumilova et. al. (2012) and Majakulma (2011) have carried out studies focusing on international graduates from Finnish higher education institutions and their success in getting employed after graduation. Majakulma (2011) reported that the graduates of various study fields from four different Universities of Applied Sciences had a good employment status and that their employment was supported by their education in Finland as well as the connections to the labour market they had been able to make during their studies. Shumilova et. al. (2012) indicated on employment rates of 72 % among University graduates and 68 % among graduates from the Universities of Applied Sciences by the time of research. The study also demonstrated the key barriers for employment being adequate language skills in the national languages Finnish or Swedish, the lack of satisfactory networks and work experience. Also, the Finnish research has noted the overlaps between migrant categorisations, as Eskelä (2013) points out that students in the academic literature are often detached from the 'real highly qualified migration', thus pointing at the conceptual separation of working migrants and student-migrants. She writes that people who originally came to study might find themselves engaging in demanding work tasks, while others who came for work might be studying for another degree.

Other perspectives on international students brought up in Finnish research have been that of employers (e.g., Garam 2005), of integration into society and the labour market (Korhonen 2014, Ciulinaru 2010) and of housing (Eskelä 2015). However, the above-mentioned studies hardly did not take the legal status of the foreign citizen into consideration or the way it influenced employment, which is the central objective of this article.

## Methodology and empirical data

The analysis draws on in-depth qualitative interviews with seven people from five different sub-Saharan countries. The criteria for interviews were that the interviewees should have a student visa and also have experience of work in Finland. Additionally, I limited the analysis to encompass migrants from sub-Saharan African countries, since no countries on the African continent are on the list from where the EU would prefer to import students in order to get the 'best and most talented' students (EMN 2012, 22), and in this way, ensure highly skilled migration into the EU. Due to this criterion, it was very hard to find suitable informants that would have time for an in-depth interview during one of their few breaks between school, work and sleep. Although the number of interviews is limited, the data is rich and offers an in-depth view into the lives of the sub-Saharan migrants in Finland.

Many of the EU-countries try to attract students from third countries that are considered strategic for the economy, the industry or for science. These are usually considered to be the BRIC-countries and the countries in Southeast Asia or in Latin America (EMN 2013, 7). Regarding the visa regime, the African countries were of interest since citizens of African countries have experienced a great loss in

mobility rights during the last 40 years (Mau et al. 2015). A possible reason for the tightening of mobility rights is the fear, from the part of decision makers, of irregular migration from Africa (ibid.). According to the *Evaluation report on combating illegal immigration 2014* prepared by the Finnish national police board (2015,17) the risk of immigration on wrong basis is high among migrants with student visas from certain African and South Asian countries. This points towards high suspicion of persons applying for a student visa, as the aim, according to the police, might be something else than studying.

Among my informants there were three women and four men between 20 and 32 years old. The informants had been in Finland between 10 months and 8 years. Six of them studied in the Universities of Applied Sciences and one at the University.<sup>3</sup> All the interviews were conducted in English in the centre of Helsinki during spring and autumn of 2013. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and anonymised for the sake of confidentiality.

As I started doing the interviews, the fluid character of different migrant categories became clear. The students' lives were characterised by their different experiences and some of the informants had even at one point or another changed basis for residence, most often from studies to work, during their stay in Finland. This is also underlined in previous research that demonstrates the difficulty of finding informants from a specific migrant category, since migrants often have multifaceted experiences that hardly ever can be placed inside a framework defined beforehand (Könönen 2014, 40). Despite the heterogeneous life paths of the informants, I found several similar experiences concerning studies and work that offered an interesting departing point for the analysis. All the informants had highly precarious experiences of work in the service sector and expressed unfair treatment in everyday situations and recruitment at the work place.

## Borders within the precarisation process

*'Coming to Finland wasn't just like picking you bag and being there',* one of the informants, Patrick, says. Evidently, migration to study in Finland does not only require economic and cultural capital and knowledge of how to proceed in the jungle of bureaucracy, but it also involves meeting certain visa standards to be able to cross the border.

When you finally pass it [the entrance exam] then you face the embassy, with all the requirements. (Ama)

In order to enable migration, firstly the barriers faced in the Africa-based embassies have to be overcome. Mau et al. (2015) point out that visa policies function as one of the most important ways of controlling and restricting movement across borders. Through the exercise of extraterritorial control of potential border-crossers, the states broaden their governance of mobility to the country of departure (ibid.). The barriers faced at the embassies can thus be analysed as a locus of extended borders for entering the EU. By succeeding to fill the requirements of having 6720 euros in the bank account, having bought a private health insurance, being admitted for higher education in Finland and ensuring that the actual purpose of migration is to study and not something else, the person has 'deserved' entrance in the common space of 'freedom, justice and security' – the EU.

Being granted a student visa does not however ensure a continuous stay for the entire study period in Finland, since the

permit is temporary and has to be renewed every year. This means that the migrant, once a year, in addition to a certain amount of study credits, has to prove being able to attain the economic requirements of the visa. Consequently, wage labour becomes an increasingly important aspect for ensuring a continued stay. The informants claim that they did not come to Finland in order to work; as was the case in a research on Filipina nurses, in which many had student visas, but they primarily came to Finland with the intention to work (Vaittinen & Näre 2014). Instead, my informants saw no other alternative than working besides their studies. All of them pointed out how hard it was to fit in the studies with working and expressed frustration over not being able to, on their own terms, form a kind of life they desired. One can reflect on whether my position as a researcher might have influenced the interview results regarding the claims of not having come to work in Finland, but to study. However, my argument lies in pointing at the processes of precarisation in the data. Whether or not the persons interviewed wanted to work, it is evident that the student visa and the informants' socio-economic background shaped their working experience, and hence, the formation of a certain type of labour force.

The severe precarious working conditions formed the most prominent characteristics of the work done by the student-migrants interviewed for this research. Employment insecurity, short term contracts and obstruction of participation in labour unions were aspects identifiable in the informants' experiences. All the informants shared the unconditional need for money to be able to stay in the country and consequently had jobs in the low paid service sector, working as cleaners, news deliverers or as privately employed care workers. This caused insecurity and difficulties in concentrating on their studies. The informants also reported that in comparison to workers with other ethnic backgrounds, those who were identified as 'Africans' by the employers usually experienced having to take on the hardest tasks, had to stay overtime and were placed in the worst position at the working place. Thus, they experienced racial discrimination to be a significant barrier when seeking work as well as at the working place.

### Temporal aspects of precarisation

The informants' experiences encompass several intersecting temporal aspects, which together form one dimension of precarity. Firstly, the *ongoing movement* as one condition of precarity (Precarias a la deriva 2009, 30), is descriptive of the migrants' experiences in the research data. The working migrants constantly move between cleaning hotel rooms, from door to door to deliver newspapers and from school, to language classes and home.

Usually, my classes start at 8 o'clock, sometimes I get home [from work by] 7 o'clock. It has been situations that I get off maybe 7.30 in the morning and I have 30 minutes to start my school but I need to take a shower, maybe make some breakfast maybe whatever, and you realize that the time is really gone... you keep struggling, you have a lot of things on your mind. Can I give up my study or can I give up this job? (...) How long will I be living such a life? Maybe I should stop studying. But the thing is, when you think about the field job, why you are studying, you see that it's hard but yet it will come, one day it will come ... I will come to school, though late, I make sure that I come to school, come 30 minutes late into the lesson, I think it's better than staying home. –Daniel

Secondly, there are different time schedules that have to be respected, and between these schedules, a constant movement has to happen. Daniel, who works as a news deliverer, pictures it as a struggle between different schedules and time limits. His work does not allow choosing working hours, neither does his school. Daniel still believes that his efforts will be rewarded later in life. Tani who cleans hotel rooms explicates the tight schedules for cleaning – only 17 minutes per room. She illustrates cleaners as treated like machines where temporal limits are set on beforehand.

I really don't like this house keeping conditions, because people are being treated like machines, it's so calculated. (Tani)

Social interaction is not desirable at the work place since interaction with other workers reduces efficiency from the perspective of the employers. The migrant labour is instead instrumentalised and stripped of the workers' personalities. Neither the workers' knowledge nor education is taken into account at their work place. At first sight, the workers' skills or background therefore seem unimportant in the low paid sectors. However, the Finnish labour market is becoming increasingly ethnically segmented and especially the restaurant, cleaning, construction and care sectors face difficulties in attracting Finnish citizens as employees (Forsander 2007; Linnamäki-Koskela 2010). Migrant workers are also subjected to institutional racism in Finland, as established work practices inside organisations and firms are often ethnocentric and thus discriminating of migrants (Laurén & Wrede 2010). This points to the relevance of certain aspects of the living body such as race and ethnicity in hierarchically organizing the labour force.

A third significant temporal aspect in the experiences of the informants is the upper limit of approximately 25 working hours per week set by the student visa (Finnish Aliens Act 78§ 4b). Student-migrants are often aware of this and pay attention to the hour-limit. 'The definition is [that] you don't exceed the number of hours you are supposed to do here, [be]cause you know, we don't want to cause any kind of trouble for ourselves', Denis explains. Exceeding this limit includes a risk of losing the student visa and in worst case even deportation. However, not all the interviewees are as well informed as Denis, and complain about the complexity of the migration administration that causes confusion over the rights and limitations when residing on a student visa. Hence, the multiple temporalities of ongoing movement between tight schedules with an upper limit of 25 working hours per week appear as the joint result of precarisation of work and migration.

### The production of a flexible labour force

To be constantly on the move and to adopt a flexible rhythm illustrates the opposite of the Fordist strict working-hours and routines (Precarias a la deriva 2009). The precarious working conditions, characteristic of post-Fordist capitalism, affect both local workers and migrant-workers, but the mechanisms of sexism, racism, vulnerability and a legally weak position further differentiate people (Castles 2010). In 2013, 52% of the local students in Finland did paid work besides their studies (Tilastokeskus 2015). What emerges as a difference in terms of the characteristics of work between local students and student-migrants is that the local students often start working in service jobs, but then climb the ladder towards more demanding tasks such as office work, administrative work or scientific work and the purpose of work is often to get relevant working experience (Tanskanen 2013, 44).



In contrast to local students, my data demonstrates that it is difficult for student-migrants to get other jobs than precarious ones in the low-paid sector and that none of the interviewed student-migrants had worked in their own field of studies. According to Tani, she is doing the impossible' when combining two different jobs with studies. Tani also expresses that she cannot stop working because she has to secure her stay in Finland, while Ama underlines the anxious thought of being without work and therefore not being able to meet the requirements.

It feels like I have all problems in the world, but I can't stop, I have to continue, I have to do the jobs. (Tani)

You think: Whoops! I have to renew my residence, and I have no job. How can I get the 6000 euros together? (Ama)

Clearly, many of the informants are performing tasks they would not like to do but are obliged to accept any kind of low-paid job in order to lead their lives. This resonates with the research indicating that a majority of migrants living in Finland are working in the low- or medium-skilled sector (Komulainen 2013). Existing research also demonstrates that employers employ migrant workers because of their flexibility (Näre 2013) and because they easily accept working conditions offered by the employer (Anderson & Ruhs 2010, 30). Legal citizens usually have more options of refusing certain low paid jobs since they have access to welfare services (Näre 2013). That migrants find themselves in a position where they have to accept low-paid and precarious jobs illustrates their structurally unequal position on the labour market (ibid.).

The lives of the student-migrants are further precarised through the regulation of their possibilities of staying in the country that point at the importance of structures of the residence permits in creating migrants as flexible workers (Könönen 2014). Since the migrants examined here are not EU-citizens, they become deportable subjects, as there is an ongoing possibility of being deported (De Genova 2002). To minimize the chance of deportation, these migrants accept almost any job they can get while respecting the hour-limit for working. Deportability can thus be identified as an important part of the immigration administration and the production of a precarious labour force (Könönen 2012; Anderson 2011 et al.; Anderson & Ruhs 2010).

Borders and residence permits, as a concrete materialisation of borders, are hence involved in creating an easily exploitable migrant labour force. Migrants have to sell their labour force in order to be able to hold on to their visa, but can only do it inside certain boundaries. It is characteristic for those with a student visa that the borders produce room for even more flexibility to respond to the demands on the labour market than those with a permanent work permits can achieve. The worker's visa in Finland, that can be both temporary or issued for a longer period, is usually linked to a specific job or branch that creates migrants with other kinds of permits as more flexible workers (Könönen 2014).

In conclusion, the analysis offers a basis for talking about a new subject-position, the *student-migrant-worker*<sup>4</sup> as a part of various groupings of mobile labour force that are being governed through borders, offering a cheap and flexible labour force where needed. When the residence permits are considered as extensions of borders, it can be argued that rather than functioning as barriers, the borders reproduce a peculiar system of international division of labour. This is not a static division between a (future) highly skilled labour force in the Global North and a weakly paid reserve army of labour in the Global South (cf. Delgado Wise 2015). Instead, it is constituted of groupings

of flexible and mobile labour force deviating from the figures important in the development of the welfare state, such as the 'citizen' and the 'worker' (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). Hence, the work norm cannot be considered formed through a simple exclusion of people who cannot work, but new subjectivities are produced as attached to the means of production (Tazzioli 2015), offering the capitalist system appropriate subjects to exploit. The migration and border regime therefore implies more than just the governing of movement. It is also a technology for producing subjects and governing people's lives (ibid.).

### ***Towards global mobility***

The experiences of the student-migrants are in many ways temporally fragmented. The informants have had to plan their time carefully to fit their studies with many different jobs, while respecting the boundaries of the visa. Griffiths et al. (2013) write that uncertain futures in terms of immigration status or work often lead migrants into accepting jobs with little structure or regularity. Many of the informants approach the problem by thinking '*I'll do this until I find something better*', using the words of Ama. Yet, the precarious condition is not confined to work, but spread out over the migrants' lives, creating a continuous state of insecurity. The informants explain that it is impossible to plan anything or to imagine an end to the precarious situation. The inability to plan one's future is partly an effect of the temporary student visa that has to be renewed every year. Through the temporary residence permit, the student-migrants are defined as temporary stayers according to a methodologically nationalist assumption that conceives time as either permanent or non-permanent (Robertson 2014). Temporariness is in the end not necessarily what defines the migrants' subjective experiences, but a fragmented lived time (ibid.). Some of the informants have had temporary residence permits for up to six years and have been leading their lives one year at a time, not knowing if their economic resources or amount of completed studies will be enough for a continued stay.

To determine if a migrant will be staying temporarily or permanently in a place is impossible to do beforehand. Many of the informants had not even decided whether they would like to stay in Finland or not, and claim that this depends on the situation in the labour market. None of them wants to continue with the tough service work, sometimes referred to in the interviews as the 'stereotypical work' having in view low paid work reserved for, often racialized, migrants. Sandra is at the time working in a cleaning company that, according to her, overworks and underpays its workers.

I would rather go back home to work with a good job instead of staying and being forced to do something that my heart has refused. (Sandra)

The future depends on the possibilities of getting an interesting job after graduation or finding a new suitable basis for residence in the country. Earlier research from Finland demonstrates that this is difficult because of language barriers, lack of right contacts or work experience, discrimination and a restrictive residence permit system (Kärki 2005, Vehaskari 2010). Viewing the agency of the migrants and their decision-making as ongoing rather than planned, demonstrates that the division between permanent and temporary migrants is fluid, and in the end, the figures of 'permanent' and 'temporary migrant' do not exist (Griffiths et al. 2013).

Not having a clear plan or a set future, but still constantly being active and occupied with work may also function as a possible

way towards a sense of belonging. This could hence be viewed as a strategy for minimising temporariness and the experiences of a fragmented lived time.

In Finland, I've always been active, I was a student, I was working as au pair and I had the cleaning jobs and I did the house-keeping job, volunteered and I was active you know, I go to church, I meet friends, I would actually say I'm quite integrated, at least more, I'm on my way to integration. (Tani)

I get adapted to any place easily, so I consider it my home. Cause I have not been ...for a long time [in Finland], I can go maybe after 2–3 years. (Eric)

Different from the migrants who have a lot free time, such as detainees or asylum seekers who are being excluded from work while waiting for their decision and might have experiences of feeling socially abnormal or outside the 'rush' of rest of the society (Griffiths et. al. 2013), being occupied most of the time in organizing functions for the student-migrants as a way of avoiding the feeling of being 'outside'.

The fact that the migrants' stay in Finland is considered temporary brings up interesting questions of inclusion and integration and to what extent social inclusion is made possible beyond the assumed permanent residency. Taking the precarious and fragmented experiences into consideration, assertions such as Tani's point at provisional attempts to integration. The result is inclusion in the normative working life temporarily and for short periods at a time. To not be a permanent immigrant staying in one place, and instead having to work on temporary basis, challenges the presumed integration process of becoming a part of the social groupings and institutions, most often through work, (Forsander 2001) of the society one has decided to settle down in. Integration is often reflected against the norm of full time work but is increasingly challenged as part-time and short-term jobs become more common and a growing number of residence permits are issued on temporary basis. Eric says, he considers Finland his home for the moment, even though he is not planning to stay permanently in Finland. Hence, these student-migrants, without any clear plans of whether to stay for a longer time in Finland or not, appear as persons striving for global mobility opposing the clear distinction between inclusion and exclusion. Consequently, the blurred lines between inclusion and exclusion produce new social formations and subjectivities (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

## Conclusions

This article has examined non-EU migrants from different sub-Saharan African countries on a student visa in Finland. I have demonstrated that these migrants often are a part of the migrant labour force, thus bridging the gap between the administrative migrant categories – student-migrant and migrant-worker. The analysis emanates from borders as flexible and located at the centre of the migrants' lives, which are manifested in the temporary visa the migrants have obtained. Since the visa implies certain requirements and restricts the migrants' social and political rights, their possibilities of forming a life in a way they would want to, are remarkably limited.

The article has illustrated processes of precarisation of the lives of sub-Saharan student-migrant-workers in Finland. They usually have experiences of work in the low-paid sector in which they don't get to use their knowledge or skills. The article has demonstrated

that the precarious circumstances extend outside the workplace and push the student-migrant-workers to constantly move between work, school and home. The ongoing movement combined with a temporary visa, produce experiences of a fragmented lived time. The possibilities of planning one's future are limited since the requirements of the visa need to be fulfilled in order to avoid any risk of deportation. Consequently, insecure migrant lives that are lived on the borders are produced. In sum, the article has highlighted the process of precarisation through the regulation of the student-migrant-workers' possibilities of staying in the country and the importance of structures of residence permits in creating migrants as flexible workers.

By identifying the subject-position of the student-migrant-worker, the overlapping administrative migrant categories are manifested. Those who inhabit such in-between categories form a well-suited group for exploitation in a capitalist system yearning for flexible and cheap labour force. To analyse the effects of multiplied borders in order to grasp the complex forms of producing specific types of labour force and subject-positions, means identifying different structures that do not form a coherent logic of capitalism. The student-migrant-workers find themselves in a complex situation in which a cheap labour force is produced; simultaneously, policies are made for Finland to become one of the leading countries on the education market. Being an interchangeable labouring subject in a post-Fordist capitalist system and representing the highly skilled 'decision-maker of tomorrow', do not function well together. This points to the asymmetry and the complexity of different national regimes and the hierarchical visa regime that need further examination, both in relation to the newly introduced fees for non-EU students in Finland, as well as in relation to the complex and constantly changing global economic system.

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## Notes

1. The impacts of institutional changes (e.g., education institutes) affecting the number of student-migrant-workers in Finland and their access to the labour market are complex, and of which a thorough analysis is unfortunately outside the scope of this article.
2. Fees of minimum 1500 euros/year will be introduced in the autumn of 2017 for students from outside of the EU/EEA-countries. The law came into effect 1.1.2016. *Government Bill HE 77 2015 vp*. [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/HallituksenEsitys/Sivut/HE\\_77+2015.aspx](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/HallituksenEsitys/Sivut/HE_77+2015.aspx) [Last accessed 21.12.2015]
3. These two types of universities constitute the Finnish higher education. In short, the Universities focus on research and academia, while the Universities of Applied Sciences are oriented towards professional higher education.
4. Neilson (2009) also uses the term student-migrant-worker, but referring to a political subjectivity created through modes of subjection and subjectivation, thus differing slightly from the case in this article.

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